

Written Statement of  
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2005 White House Conference on Aging Policy Committee  
Listening Session  
December 7, 2004

I am Elaine Brovont, Executive Director of Mid-Land Meals and the President of the National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Programs (NANASP). On behalf of NANASP's over 900 members across the country, and the approximate 3,000 individuals who receive meals in Area IV I thank you for this opportunity to present thoughts on the agenda for the next White House Conference on Aging.

Both NANASP members and Mid-Land Meals are dedicated to providing quality nutrition and for older Americans, and as such we have a particular interest in the upcoming White House Conference on Aging. It will be held the year before the first baby boomers become eligible for the Older Americans Act (OAA) nutrition and other service programs. This will make the OAA the first federal service program for the elderly to confront this demographic challenge.

We are all acutely aware that the population that we serve today is both changing and growing. One of the major challenges will be to attract those seniors newly eligible for OAA programs to participate. This may require a redefinition of congregate meals for a new generation. Nutrition programs will need to reassess and possibly redesign menus, service delivery methods and ancillary services offered to meet the expectations and desires of this new population, while continuing to serve those currently receiving services. Programs will have to balance these demands while adhering to federal nutritional standards in an ever-tighter budget environment.

The OAA nutrition programs and services have a great effect on several of the key issue areas the Policy Committee has identified. Nutrition is the most basic of human needs and therefore significantly impacts the health and long-term living of older Americans. Through the nutrition programs, seniors above the age of 60 can receive a meal at a congregate site or through a home-delivered program that provides one-third of their daily recommended nutritional intake. This provides a greater health status to seniors who otherwise might not be able to achieve proper nutrition. The nutrition programs also allow seniors to remain independent and in their homes instead of being prematurely institutionalized. As long-term care needs grow with increased life expectancy, home and community-based services will play an integral part in maintaining the dignity, independence, and health status of many seniors.

Nutrition programs under the OAA provide many opportunities for social engagement in both congregate and home-delivered meal programs. We depend on help from Senior

Centers and community locations to do this. It cannot be stressed enough that congregate programs are more than just a meal – they provide an opportunity for education and socialization and allow seniors to maintain community ties and stay active in society. In the home delivered program the meal delivery is at times the only chance for an isolated senior to engage in human contact. We also provide seniors with opportunity to remain active by volunteering and civic involvement.

Many NANASP members have experience with the USDA Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program, which provides seniors with coupons that may be redeemed at local farmer's markets and produce stands. This program has mutually beneficial effects in that it supports local farmers by providing a customer base for their agricultural products while ensuring that fresh fruits and vegetables necessary for a healthy diet are available to seniors who need them.

Nutrition providers are and will continue to be an essential part of the health care team and social network of older Americans. In many cases, they are the "first responder" to a senior in need. They are also a trusted source of information and resources and will likely be called upon by boomers who will take an active role in their own health care and wellness.

As a service provider I have a concern about the Title V program. It seems that the direction of training program is being emphasized rather than it being an employment program. It is my concern that many non profits will not want to consider being a host agency when trainees will be moved on before you can hardly get them trained. With new limits and expectations on Title V programs I feel it might negatively impact not-for-profit organizations as well as low income seniors needing additional income.

Therefore, NANASP and Mid-Land Meals encourages the next White House Conference on Aging to:

- Engage boomers in discussions about future directions of present day service programs for the elderly to ensure their participation;
- Recognize the crosscutting value of good nutrition to the physical and mental health of older persons;
- Examine the cost effectiveness of the Older Americans Act nutrition programs as well as the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program and recommend ways to strengthen these programs in the future;
- Recommend a regular review of the nutritional value of these programs with a special focus on having these meals be culturally and generationally responsive;
- Ensure the strongest possible commitment to food safety in all these programs.
- Review the impact the Title V program has and will have on low income seniors.

As you are aware, the next reauthorization of the OAA is scheduled for next year, as is the conference. We hope this Conference will contribute not only to the next reauthorization, but the ones that will follow over the next decade.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak at this Listening Session.